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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1543
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5452
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8228
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4973
RUEHN/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0970
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2018

TAGS: PREL ETRD PHUM BM TH

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND EAP/DAS MARCIEL URGE RTG TO BAN
IMPORTS OF BURMESE GEMS AND HARDWOODS

REF: A. SECSTATE 5276

¶B. 07 STATE 164893

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During a January 23 introductory call on Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram the Ambassador used reftel A points to encourage the RTG to adopt measures to ban the import of Burmese gems and hardwood. Noting the approaching political transition in Thailand, the Foreign Minister encouraged the USG to coordinate measures on Burma with the new government.

¶2. (C) In a separate, wide-ranging discussion on Burma issues with MFA Permanent Secretary Virasakdi Futrakul on January 23 (septel), Deputy Assistant Secretary Scot Marciel emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts to maintain pressure on the Burmese junta using mechanisms such as an import ban on Burmese gems and hardwoods. EAP DAS Marciel recognized the affect a gem and hardwood ban would have on a country like Thailand, a major importer of these products, but reiterated that it was unacceptable to continue business as usual with Burmese regime. Permsec Virasakdi took note of the USG position but underscored the hardships that sanctions such as these would cause Thailand.

¶3. (C) Comment: We will need to engage with the new government on Burma issues, as the current ministers will be replaced early next month. The new government is unlikely to be any more enthusiastic about sanctions, particularly those that directly affect the livelihoods of a significant number of Thais, but we will encourage the RTG to look for ways to exert pressure on the junta. End comment.
JOHN